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ABSTRACT

This report describes the design and experimental use of a system for classifying jail prisoners. The report identifies the information which the jailer needs to know about his prisoners and his use of that information in decision-making. Although the system was tested for only 60 days in six jails, the preliminary findings indicate that a classification system is feasible. (BH)

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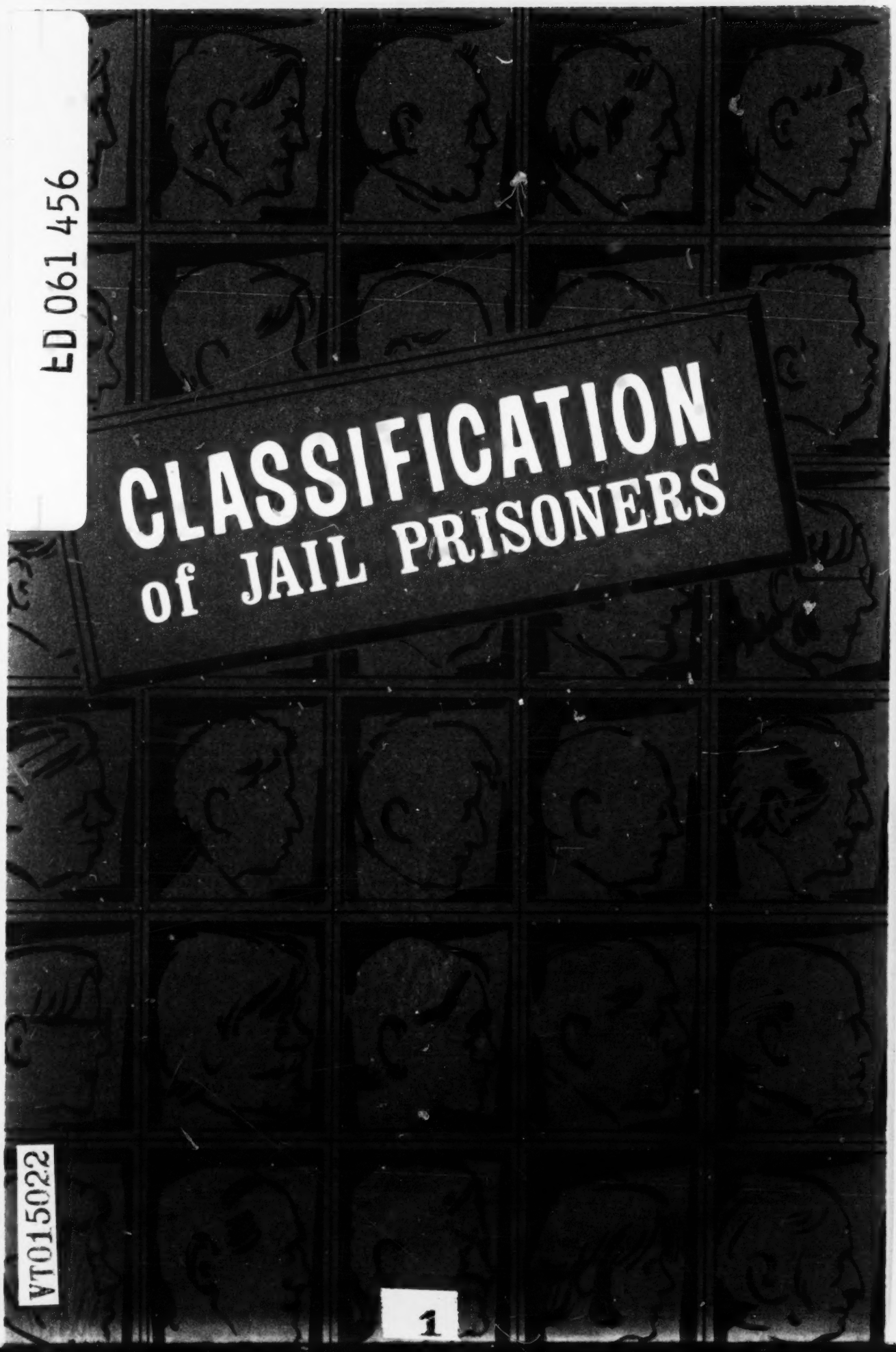

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CLASSIFICATION of JAIL PRISONERS

ED 061 456

by

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2

PREFACE

This is a report of the design and experimental use of a system for classifying jail prisoners. Scope of the system is quite narrow, although some of its future potentials are identified. Actual testing was limited to 60 days in six jails. Even so, preliminary findings offer encouragement that a system for classifying jail prisoners can be developed and applied. I am convinced that a good start has been made in fashioning a useful management tool and I offer the resources of the Bureau of Prisons to local jail officials who may want help in further exploration and development to meet their operational needs.

The emergence of a significant new idea, however small, is always an exciting event. About a year ago Mr. Richmond produced such an idea. As Assistant Director in charge of the Community Services Division, he became increasingly concerned with the functions and operating problems of local jails. He was impressed with the recurring thought that one source of problems seemed to be the rapidly changing character of the typical jail population. Jail prisoners appeared to be younger than formerly. More of them than formerly seemed highly aggressive and were charged with major crimes. Fewer than formerly seemed to have meaningful ties to the local community. Two basic questions began to take shape: What does a jailer really need to know about his prisoners? What should he do with the information if he had it?

Classification of Jail Prisoners describes an experimental approach to answers for both questions. Although Mr. Richmond conceptualized the approach, many people contributed to its development and test applications. Early in the project secretaries Nancy Kramer and Judy Meyers assisted in the design of the classification forms. With the help of Director of Jail Services R. A. Miller and Chief Inspector Harold L. Thomas, Senior Inspectors John Cossett, Hugh Crum, Francis Kirkland, Max Mustain and Hubert Raney assisted the selected sheriffs and their jail personnel in preparing the actual tests. Major credit, however, is abundantly due the officials and staff members of the test jails who were asked not only to collect information about prisoners but to adopt new policies and rearrange operating procedures so that experimental decisions could be carried out. Their willingness to participate to this extent is a tribute to their courage and their faith that jail operations can be improved.

NORMAN A. CARLSON
Director, U. S. Bureau of Prisons

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

The Jailer's Needs to Know 1

The Development and Testing of
a Classification Tool 5

Design of an experimental procedure 5

Preliminary tests 7

Prisoner inventory form 9

Major test findings 17

Future possibilities 19

Appendix A 23

Description of test jails and summary of
of test experiences

Appendix B 27

Summary report of Express
Software Systems, Inc.

THE JAILER'S NEEDS TO KNOW

The days have gone forever when jails, other than those in large metropolitan areas, dealt almost exclusively with local citizens. Not only were the reputations and backgrounds of these people generally known, but commitment to jail was a conspicuous event. From his own knowledge and information readily available to him, the jailer could quickly size up the situation and determine how best to handle each prisoner. In these days of rapid community growth and mobility, when it is commonplace for people to relocate frequently and travel from one end of the country to the other in a few hours, increasing numbers of jail prisoners are commited as total strangers. Moreover, these people may have no ties whatever to the community in which the jail is located. The proper handling of prisoners who are strangers is an entirely different problem than dealing with people who are well known.

Within the limits of the law and the framework of judicial and public expectations, the chief jailer and his staff have wide latitude for making institutional policy decisions, establishing or changing operating procedures and introducing new methods, programs and services. While the exercise of this responsibility is in the interest of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of basic jail functions, the inescapable fact is that jail personnel deal with people. For this reason, the manner in which policies, rules and procedures are applied have great importance. In part, this becomes a matter of sensitizing personnel to prisoners' needs, problems and feelings. In part, also, it is a matter of having information about individual prisoners with which to distinguish among them and to make decision choices based on these distinctions.

Just a brief look at a few ordinary jail activities will indicate how acute the need for information about prisoners can be. Take housing, for example. Any policy of housing jail prisoners will have to be determined to some extent by the kind and location of available accommodations. Yet, when choices are possible, common sense will dictate that: juvenile and female prisoners are held in seperate quarters; weak and submissive prisoners are not placed in dormitories or group cells with aggressive predatory types; prisoners with incapacitating physical handicaps are assigned to quarters on the main floor; young impressionable prisoners are separated from those who are sophisticated and calloused. Further reflection will suggest other distinctions.

One of the surest ways of inviting a law-suit, official or public censure and adverse prisoner reaction is to ignore or be unaware of a prisoner's need for emergency medical care. Will commitment policies permit the receiving officer to refuse acceptance of a person in need of immediate medical attention? If so, how does he discover that a problem exists and in what ways does he exercise this discretion? With whom and in what ways can prisoners register complaints of being ill? What is done about such complaints? What other kinds of emergency needs might arise which, if ignored, might cause great personal or family hardship or extreme and unnecessary inconvenience?

What is the work assignment policy at the jail? What should it be? How are trusties selected? Work release candidates? Many factors besides security have to be considered in making work assignment decisions. Is the prisoner physically able to the work required? A person with a heart condition, for example, or one subject to seizures should not be assigned to work in high places or at tasks requiring extreme physical exertion. Does the prisoner have the intelligence and emotional stability to follow instructions? Does he have the skills or experience that may be required? Will he take care of tools and equipment? Can he work cooperatively with others?

Adequate feeding can present problems. There may be dietary considerations, as for those who are under special medical care or those who live under strict religious observances. Food handlers should meet at least minimum public health standards of being free from infectious disease and neat in personal cleanliness. If there is a central dining room, it may be necessary to feed certain prisoners separately from certain others, such as a material witness who is to testify against a prisoner awaiting trial. When meals are served in housing units, there is a need to assure that the food is properly conveyed and that rations are distributed equitably. In this connection, it must be remembered that in group cells or dormitories weak inmates can be victimized by aggressive prisoners who will get more than their share.

Whatever correctional programs and services may be available obviously are intended for those prisoners who need them and who are eligible to participate in them. Increasing attention is being given such non-traditional pretrial programs as early diversion, pretrial liberty and emergency services to defendants and such post-conviction procedures

as extending the limits of confinement. These suggest a number of possible new roles for jails for which new capabilities and more information about prisoners will be needed.

So the jailer has various needs for various kinds of information about prisoners; and these can be defined in fairly specific terms. One kind of information is that which has *predictive value*. Information of this kind is essential to good decision-making. To illustrate: it must be decided whether to place a prisoner under maximum or minimum supervision. The prisoner's stability is an important factor in such a decision. Residence is one indicator of stability, but how long he has been a resident of the community probably is more relevant than other kinds of information about residence. Thus, in this illustration, length of residence has predictive value in determining a person's stability, whereas the address or amount of rent does not.

Another kind of information is that which can be used for *identification purposes*. Essential distinctions are made among prisoners constantly. Is he in jail awaiting trial or serving a sentence? It makes a difference. It also matters whether he will be in jail a few days or several months. Identifying information is indispensible to good decision-making. It would make little sense, for example, to enroll in Alcoholics Anonymous a prisoner who did not at least have a serious drinking problem.

A third kind of information is that which is needed for *management evaluations*. Budget requests are sought and defended in such terms as daily per capita costs for care, custody and various kinds of programs and services. Changes in policy and other management adjustments are made in part on evaluations of day-to-day operations and activities. Planning for future requirements cannot proceed very far without factual accounts of the present and careful analyses of trends. These are but a few examples of many needs for information about prisoners, their circumstances, their management and control.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF A CLASSIFICATION TOOL

The focus of concern in this project is the jailer's decision-making responsibility and whether certain kinds of information about prisoners can be obtained and used in ways which will contribute to more prompt and reliable decisions. The jailer makes many decisions of many kinds. This project is limited primarily to determinations of prisoner custody (supervision requirements) and housing assignments. These are important basic decisions that are made tens of thousands of times every day in jails throughout the United States.

This is not a new concern. For a long time jailers have rightly complained of the extreme difficulties imposed upon them in exercising their responsibilities for the safekeeping of all kinds of prisoners who come and go daily. Underlying the burden is the absence of essential information with which to make important decisions based on factual experience and differences in prisoners. Past attempts have been made to adapt to the jail setting diagnostic and case management techniques of major prisons and reformatories. These efforts have been quite unproductive for reasons which are increasingly apparent. Informational needs have not been pin-pointed. Although both prisons and jails are lock-ups, the operation of a local jail is very much unlike that of a prison for sentenced felons. Most jails have neither the staff specialists nor the time to apply diagnostic procedures that are suitable for prisons.

Development of this experimental classification tool has been predictated on certain beliefs or assumptions. (1) It is possible to pin-point the jailers information needs and to distinguish various kinds of information in accordance with the uses for it. (2) From an array of information it is possible to select specific items which will have identification and predictive value for decision-making. (3) The kinds of information needed for basic decisions related to the management and control of jail prisoners can be obtained promptly and easily. (4) Information uses can be simplified and standardized.

DESIGN OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

From years of experience in classifying sentenced prisoners and from published designs of bail reform procedures, items of information

were listed which were thought to have a significant bearing on decisions as to prisoner supervision and housing assignments. More specifically, the object was to find what were thought to be the best indicators of emotional stability and mature behavior habits. The list was revised many times to insure that it included only the kinds of information that could be obtained during a brief interview, subject to quick and simple verification as might be necessary. The list was reduced to what was thought to be only key items and it was arranged so that it could be recorded by simply checking "yes" or "no" responses to direct questions.

The next task was to isolate the stability indicators and assign reasonable numerical weights to them since it could be expected that some items would be better predictors than others. It was also thought that some variables would be predictors only when measured in combination with other variables. Classification experience also suggested that not every important information item lends itself to variable weighting. Some items produce simple "either"-"or" decisions. It was known only that, by whatever means, the predictive values of the information at hand would have to be substantially greater than chance or the information would be useless as a decision-making aid.

With these considerations in mind, the information list was amended further and converted into an inventory of basic prisoner data which contained a mix of both predictive variables and items of identification that presumably would be helpful in decision-making, plus a few other items that might be useful for other purposes. Two overlay sheets were designed: one intended as an aid in determining degree of supervision required; the other as an aid to making housing assignments. Both were adapted to a prisoner inventory form with window cut-outs matched to the possible responses to certain information questions. The supervision overlay was geared to three grades of custody (maximum, medium and minimum supervision) in contrast to the usual two (trusties and all others) and included both "either"-"or" and weighted variable items of information. The housing overlay was limited to "either"-"or" items of information with a coded explanation of how these should be considered in making housing assignments.

The prisoner inventory and the two overlays were subjected to two pretests. The first was against the case records of 50 randomly selected Federal prisoners. This group was not like a random group of jail prisoners in that they were all adult males serving sentences, but they had

been classified as to custody and housing. Inventory sheets were completed from information contained in the case records. Both overlay sheets were applied. The housing overlay showed nothing significant but the custody overlay produced a spread of maximum, medium and minimum custody decision recommendations that conformed roughly with decisions that had already been made.

Adjustments were made in some of the inventory items and in the scoring weights of the custody overlay. These manipulations produced greater conformity with the 50 case records of decisions already made. These revisions were further pretested with nearby jail prisoners A set of 109 additional inventories were completed from actual interviews. The revised custody overlay produced tabulated results that showed a nearly normal distribution of maximum, medium and minimum custody candidates. Unfortunately, there was no way of comparing these findings with actual custody decisions since neither of the cooperating jails had such a classification system. Likewise, because of the nature of both facilities, there was no way of utilizing the housing assignment overlay.

PRELIMINARY TESTS

With this encouragement, it was decided that the materials should be put to experimental use. The items of information for decision-making were rearranged again to further simplify their recording and use. A few new items were added, not for decision-making but to demonstrate the convenience and usefulness of a single record of basic information that could serve many administrative and management purposes. It was also thought that the numerically weighted values of certain information items used for custody decisions could also be used to predict certain kinds of actual behavior. In other words, it was assumed that the higher the numerical score the more likely the prisoner would be to accept the circumstances of his imprisonment and to relate satisfactorily to fellow prisoners and staff members. Accordingly, a questionnaire was added to the back of the prisoner inventory to test this assumption.

Following is the experimental Prisoner Inventory as it was prepared for use during a predetermined 60 day test period at selected jails. Both overlays were readied by final editing to insure that self-contained instructions were as complete and clear as possible. To these was added a set of general instructions for the actual use tests.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRISONER INVENTORY

It is intended that the Prisoner Inventory be completed for each prisoner admitted to jail, on the basis of a brief interview and such additional verifications as may be necessary. This may be done as part of the booking process. If not done then, the Inventory should be completed as soon after booking as possible. NOTE: The Prisoner Inventory is designed to be used only for healthy male prisoners. Females and prisoners who obviously are in need of immediate medical care should be considered special cases.

The upper part of the Prisoner Inventory consists of information items that have a bearing on decisions as to housing and supervision required. Overlay sheets, which carry their own instructions, are provided to assist in making these two decisions. The information contained in this portion of the Inventory, along with that appearing on the lower part, may have other possible uses as well. Check the YES or NO column for each category of items. Most check marks will appear in the YES column, but check only the one that is appropriate. Example, in the category of "AGE", the prisoner is either legally a juvenile, under 21, between 21 and 25, between 26 and 35 or over 35. Check one.

As a guide to deciding the degree of custody or amount of supervision required for the prisoner, *carefully* place the Supervision overlay sheet on top of the completed Prisoner Inventory so that the proper items show through the windows. Look first for W items that show through, then add the numerical values of all the other items that show. Enter W or the total score on the top of the Inventory sheet. Consult the instructions on the overlay sheet as a guide to custody decision. There is reason to believe that this indication is reliable, *but it is not a substitute for common sense.*

For housing decisions follow the same procedure of matching the overlay sheet to the Inventory form. The numbers at the windows, however, are not to be added. They are code numbers that are keyed to specific instructions on the bottom of the overlay sheet. Note that these are not substitutes for common sense.

8/9

To assist in the experimental use of these forms, enter the custody classification and housing assignment at the upper left hand corner of the Prisoner Inventory form. Whenever either of these classifications may be changed, enter the date and the change on the top of the form, from left to right, so that the last entry on the right will be the current one.

There is a question as to whether the decision-maker should be the same person who completed the Prisoner Inventory. For experimental purposes this does not matter. If the same employee performs both functions he may develop certain biases that will cause him to complete the Inventory to coincide with what he thinks the outcome should be. It is possible, too, that in some jails decisions of this kind are made only by supervisory personnel. On the other hand, a rating instrument of any kind can never be all-inclusive or perfect. This one is not a substitute either for common sense or for knowledge, experience and skills in dealing with people. From this point of view, it is possible that the person completing the Inventory can make better decisions because his personal contact with the prisoner is better than relying entirely on a piece of paper that somebody else provided.

Again, because of great differences in the nature of jail operations, it may not be necessary to complete the Prisoner Inventory form on all persons booked. For example, the value of completed forms for offenders who will be held in jail for only a few hours or a day or two may be questioned.

On the back of the Prisoner Inventory form is a questionnaire relative to prisoner characteristics and behavior that were observed. This should be completed as part of the experiment by the jail supervisor or other staff member who is in a posistion to know. The evaluation should be made on the day of the prisoner's release from jail or at the end of the 60-day experiment, whichever comes first. Simply place a check mark in the appropriate column as to each item, record any additional comments; enter date, signature and title.

All Prisoner Inventory forms must be picked up by the Jail Inspector at the conclusion of the 60-day trial period and mailed promptly to the Bureau. Review and analysis of the data will be primarily for the purpose of determining the reliability of the forms as a decision-making guide. In addition, it is hoped that the forms will be an aid in predicting the behavior of certain catagories of prisoners.

DEGREE OF SUPERVISION REQUIRED*

PRISONER INVENTORY

RATING	YES	NO
COMMITMENT STATUS		
On writ W		
Other W		
Possible detainers W		
Prior commitment 3		
AGE		
Juvenile W		
21-25 1		
26-35 2		
Over 35 3		
MARITAL STATUS		
Married 3		
Family support —		
total 3		
major 2		
partial 1		

RATING	YES	NO
RESIDENCE		
Duration— ** (see footnote)		
under 6 mos. 1-0		
6 mos. to 1 yr. 2-1		
over 1 yr. 3-2		
Duration in community —		
under 6 mos. 1-0		
6 mos. to 1 yr. 2-1		
over 1 yr. 3-2		
Rents by —		
month 2		
Leasing or pur. 3		
Lives with family 3		
RECENT WORK HISTORY		
Employed or in school —		
full time 3		
part time 2		
under 6 mos. 1		
6 mos. to 1 yr. 2		
over 1 yr. 3		

RATING	YES	NO
MENTAL CONDITION OR ATTITUDE		
Appears or acts —		
questionable W		
abnormal W		

* to be used for healthy male prisoners only—females, and prisoners in need of medical care, are to be considered special cases.

**if residence is in local cummunity, use left hand rating figures; if not, use right hand rating figures.

NOTES

Purpose: Only those items of the Prisoner Inventory thought to have a direct bearing on custody decisions are used.

Rating legend: 3 denotes a good indicator of stability.
2 denotes a fair indicator of stability.
1 denotes a minimum indicator of stability.
W (Warning) is an indicator of probable instability.
(Any W item checked means that in the absence of any compeling reason to the contrary, the prisoner should not be placed in reduced custody and may require maximum supervision at all times.)

Scoring: W: If a check mark appears for any item rated W, the prisoner should be classified maximum custody until further investigation or a change of circumstances suggests otherwise.

10 or less : a good candidate for maximum custody.
11 - 15 : a questionable candidate for medium custody.
16 - 20 : a good candidate for medium custody.
21 - 25 : a questionable candidate for minimum custody.
26 - 30 : a good candidate for minimum custody.

PRISONER INVENTORY

NAME: NUMBER: DATE: TIME:

	YES	NO
COMMITMENT STATUS		
Awaiting trial		
Awaiting sentence		
Awaiting appeal		
Direct sentence or fine		
Parole violation		
On writ		
Other		
specify:		
Possible detainers		
explain:		
Prior commitment		
AGE		
Juvenile		
Under 21		
21-25		
26-35		
Over 35		
SEX		
Male		
Female		
CHARGE OR OFFENSE		
Against person		
Sex		
Property		
Public order		
Other		
MARITAL STATUS		
Married		
Family support —		
total		
major		
partial		
none		

	YES	NO
ESTIMATED STAY		
One day or less		
2 days to 1 wk.		
Over 1 wk. to 1 mo.		
Over 1 mo. to 6 mos.		
Over 6 mos. to 1 yr.		
Over 1 yr.		
RESIDENCE		
Address:		
Duration —		
under 6 mos.		
6 mos. to 1 yr.		
over 1 yr.		
Duration in community —		
under 6 mos.		
6 mos. to 1 yr.		
over 1 yr.		
Rents by —		
day or week		
month		
Leasing or purchasing		
Lives with family		
RECENT WORK HISTORY		
Employer's name		
and address:		
Employed or in school —		
full time		
part time		
odd jobs		
unemployed		
under 6 mos.		
6 mos. to 1 yr.		
over 1 yr.		
WORK SKILLS (describe)		

	YES	NO
MENTAL CONDITION		
OR ATTITUDE		
Appears or acts —		
normal		
questionable		
abnormal		
describe:		
PHYSICAL CONDITION		
General appearance —		
good		
questionable		
poor		
Present complaint		
explain:		
Taking medication		
description:		
Doctor's care		
physician's name:		
Appearance or		
history of —		
alcohol		
drugs		

Describe prisoner's responsibilities, if any:

Persons interested in this prisoner:

Name	Address	Tel.	Relation

Immediate problems: (list in order of importance) **(Action indicated)**

Other observations or comments:

12/13

Prisoner Characteristics and Behavior	True	More True Than False	More False Than True	Un-true	Don't Know
General Adjustment					
1. Accepted circumstances without complaints.					
2. Behavior was satisfactory and dependable.					
3. Participated in available activities regularly.					
4. Positive outlook toward release.					
5. Escaped or attempted escape.					
Relationships with Personnel					
1. Cooperative and respectful.					
2. Accepted instructions and constructive criticism.					
3. Sought no personal favors; did not fraternize.					
4. Enjoyed the confidence and respect of personnel.					
Relationships with Prisoners					
1. Sought few associates and chose them carefully.					
2. Respectful and considerate.					
3. Self-assured; maintained own identity.					
4. Enjoyed the confidence and respect of others.					

Comments:

Date:	Signature:	Title:

HOUSING*

PRISONER INVENTORY

CODE NO.	YES	NO
COMMITMENT STATUS		
Awaiting trial 1		
Awaiting sentence 1		
Other 2		
Prior commitment 3		
AGE		
Juvenile 4		
Under 21 5		
SEX		
Female 6		
CHARGE OR OFFENSE		
Against person 7		
Sex 8		

CODE NO.	YES	NO
MENTAL CONDITION OR ATTITUDE		
Appears or acts —		
questionable 9		
abnormal 9		
PHYSICAL CONDITION		
General appearance —		
questionable 9		
poor 9		
Doctor's care 9		
Appearance or history of —		
alcohol 9		
drugs 9		

*to be used for all commitments

Code No	Action
1	Should be kept apart from sentenced prisoners if possible.
2	Should be kept apart from sentenced prisoners if possible and if material witness, awaiting sanity hearing, etc., may require separate quarters.
3	The degree of supervision required and the conduct record of a prior commitment are good indicators of what can be expected on this commitment.
4	Must be kept entirely separate from all adults.
5	If weak submissive type, may need protection from sophisticated, aggressive types.
6	Must be kept entirely separate from all males.
7	Others may need protection from aggressive, predatory types.
8	Child molesters and rapists may need protection from others. Aggressive homosexuals may need to be segregated, passive homosexuals may need protection.
9	Obtain medical advice for housing requirements.

For an adequate test it was hoped that five or six jails could be selected that would represent geographical spread, different size and various kinds of operations. It was also hoped that local jail officials could be found who would be willing and able to make operational changes during the 60-day test period in order that decisions called for by the classification forms could actually be applied. Six such jails were identified and the Federal Jail Inspectors responsible for them were brought together for briefings on the test and discussions of the kinds of operational changes that might be considered. They were also informed how to help jail personnel prepare for the test experience. The kinds of assistance that might be needed to complete the experiment were anticipated. It was determined that the test period should run from May 1 to June 30, 1970. As soon as the test ended the Inspectors involved were to collect all of the completed forms and send them to Express Software Systems, Inc. of New York City with whom a contract was made for processing and analyzing the test data. (See Appendix B for their summary report).

Major test findings: A single general conclusion about the experiment, such as that it succeeded or failed, would have little meaning. The fact is that in both operational and analytical terms the test experience was highly encouraging in a number of particulars and just as disappointing in others. The experiment also produced some outcomes that were unforeseen.

Findings related to basic assumptions. Assumption (1): It is possible to pin-point the jailers information needs and to distinguish various kinds of information in accordance with the uses for it. The test confirmed this. All information items used in the test were specific and they were of three distinct types, all of which were applied in one way or another. Assumption (2): From an array of information it is possible to select specific items which will have identification and predictive value for decision-making. The test confirmed this. See discussion of findings related to experimental assumptions, below, and Appendix B. Assumption (3): The kinds of information needed for basic decisions can be obtained promptly and easily. The test confirmed this. Interviews with new prisoners were conducted at the time of booking or soon thereafter. Interviews were completed in ten minutes or less each by line officers who were given minimum instructions in how to conduct such interviews. Decisions as to custody and housing assignments were made

instantly. Assumption (4): Information uses can be simplified and standardized. The test confirmed this. See the custody and housing overlays both of which were used simultaneously in six different jails for a period of 60 days.

Findings related to experimental assumptions. Assumption (a): It is possible to classify jail prisoners into three grades of custody, instead of the usual two. The test confimed this. Of 1,735 prisoners processed in six jails over a 60-day period 743 were classified maximum custody, 886 medium custody and 106 minimum custody. Assumption (b): An instrument can be designed which will reliably identify which prisoners should be classified maximum, medium and minimum custody. The test provided statistical encouragement that this is possible. See Appendix B. There was about a .70 level of correlation between recommended custody and actual custody decisions in all test jails. Assumption (c): An instrument can be designed which will help to avoid improper and unwise housing assignments. The test provided neither positive nor negative clues as to this. Whether because of lack of understanding or reluctance to modify operational customs for a limited test period, there was little indication that available housing accommodations were differentiated or stratified to enable a test of this assumption. Assumption (d): The scoring values used in making custody decisions can also be used to predict prisoner behavior. The test provided neither positive nor negative clues as to this. No answers were recorded on this part of the Prisoner Inventory forms in over three-fourths of them. With many entries incomplete on the remaining one-forth, meaningful data analysis was impossible.

While these results are directly related to the primary purposes of the test, the experiment produced a number of other significant findings:

The Prisoner Inventory itself can be a useful identifier of prisoner types. Examples: Officials at one jail expressed surprise at finding so high a proportion of drug users. At another jail staff expressed surprise at the number of young prisoners awaiting trial on serious charges. At a third jail the Prisoner Inventory documented the burdensome process of repeated bookings of habitual drunks.

The Prisoner Inventory can provide information that is useful in identifying correctional needs of prisoners. The jail with the high proportion of drug users planned to seek the assistance of the county medical association in treating this problem. The same jail began to think about ways of increasing prisoners' educational achievement.

In the four test jails where breakdowns of one kind or another did not force abandonment of the experiment, jail officials were unanimous in their observation that the project contributed to a marked improvement in prisoner attitudes and staff morale. The possibility of this kind of benefit had not been foreseen in the experimental design and in the absence of scientific measures of what actually happened one can only speculate about it. Perhaps the prisoners who were interviewed reacted in positive ways to the attention they received (and possibly to the implicit expectation that the interviews were conducted for some beneficial purpose). It is possible that personnel found reassurance in a better understanding of prisoners as people with the new information produced. It could be that the face-to-face relationship which an interview requires has its own training value for staff. This is to say that as staff begins to look upon prisoners in new and different ways, this triggers new thoughts and ideas about prisoners and about the job of managing them in jail.

The test produced another important finding: this or any other approach to the classification of jail prisoners will fail without (a) real commitment to it by administrators and supervisors; (b) adequate staff training and operational preparation and (c) supervision to insure consistency in application. These lessons can be clearly seen in Appendix A which briefly describes each of the test jails and summarizes each of the test experiences. Despite the best of pretest intentions to minimize breakdowns and misunderstandings, the facts are that two jails abandoned the project after the first week or two, none completed all of the Prisoner Inventory forms and none fully applied the kinds of decisions that the project was supposed to test. This is not stated as an indictment at all and any blame for this disappointing performance must be shared by the project directors and the Jail Inspectors involved. This finding is invaluable as an aid to any further experimentation.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Although the experiment was incomplete in a number of respects it has demonstrated some of its potentials of one approach to the classification of jail prisoners. Preliminary experience with this approach suggests that it can be useful to jail managers in a number of ways and that it can be applied with relative safety.

That the basic Prisoner Inventory and the overlays need further refinement is beyond question. While, as a whole, the Prisoner Inventory form produced very few "no answers" during the test some items were

responded to more completely than others. Further adjustments are needed to reduce "no answers" to absolute minimums. Through application in other jail settings and further analysis it should be possible to increase the sensitivity and reliability of the system as a decision-making aid. The underlying concept, and the forms used can be developed to meet other jail management needs. For example, information can be gathered and recorded to create an essential prisoner information system. Information can be used to identify and assess the nature of prisoners' correctional needs. Further experimentation may enable the development of classification materials as diagnostic and predictive instruments for the use of correctional program managers, judges and other concerned officials both within and outside the criminal justice system.

An effective prisoner classification system can have even more immediate operational benefits. (1) Improved security and control of prisoners will be assured through identifying and providing necessary surveillance for those who need closest supervision. Direct benefits should be realized in fewer escapes, assaults, destruction of property and similar behavior which is disruptive and threatening to good order and safety. (2) It should be possible for administrators and supervisors to use available personnel more efficiently. When prisoner housing assignments, work assigments and other activities are stratified and regulated according to custody classifications, supervision and controls are applied where needed and only to the extent circumstances require. (3) The combination of (1) and (2) should result in greater flexibility in jail operations. For example, minimum custody prisoners can be permitted more activity than others. Minimum custody housing units can be of less secure construction, more remotely located and checked less frequently than others. Personnel deployment can be concentrated or diluted in accordance with custody groups of prisoners, as well as the supervision requirements of various activities and the time of day. (4) When privileges and opportunities to participate in various activities are geared to custody classifications there will be built-in incentive for most prisoners to aspire to the most favorable grades of custody. This implies that prisoners can and will be reclassified upward or downward as their attitudes, behavior and circumstances warrant. (5) An effective system of prisoner classification will provide a data base for periodic reexamination of policy, evaluations of operating efficiency and future planning. This is to say that factual information about prisoner characteristics, their needs for control and services and the manner of their adaptation to

confinement can be translated into requirements of correctional program planning and architectural design of new facilities.

Hopefully, this project has suggested a degree of confidence is warranted that a system for classifying jail prisoners can be engineered and applied. There can be no question that the pay-offs of such a system will be worth the effort and expense. May the project have provided the inspiration for further explorations.

21

Appendix A

JAIL A is a small, rural type jail in the Southwest built in 1919 with a total capacity of 74. Many of the prisoners are local Indians serving short sentences on drunkenness charges. Housing is of inside cell type with a day room. All maintenance work is performed by 8 trusties. Activities are limited to religious services conducted by lay preachers, day room recreation, use of donated reading materials and personal radios.

A few of the Prisoner Inventory forms were completed but no attempt was made to use the information for decision-making and the statisticians were unable to process the data. The Jail Sergeant felt that the forms did help discover a possible T.B. case and identify a number of prisoners who were supposed to be on some type of medication. For the most part, he felt, the Inventory was of no value. In his words, "It sure don't work on Indians."

JAIL B is a fairly new metropolitan jail in the Southeast with a rated capacity of 955. Two other separate units are operated conjointly with it; a new lock-up for traffic offenders and a minimum security stockade, primarily for sentenced prisoners. At the main jail there are several types of single and group cell housing. All work except food service is performed by stockade trusties. Other activities include worship services and religious education classes, individual and group counseling, central radio, TV and dayroom recreation.

This jail was, by far, the largest contributor to the test sample. Nearly 1,200 prisoners were processed during the two-month period. Unfortunately, entries were not made on the back of the Prisoner Inventory form. Thus it was not possible to analyze the relationship between supervision scores and subsequently observed behavior and characteristics. During the test period all newly-commited prisoners were kept in holding cells until they were classified. The test material was used in limited ways for housing assignments, selection of trusties and seperation of medical cases needing special attention. Jail officials expressed surprise at finding so high a proportion of young offenders and unmarried drug users. It was thought that more minimum custody candidates should have been identified by the classification material and staff began to see the need for additional information on the Prisoner Inventory form, such as drug use and educational achievement.

Staff consensus was that test materials were highly useful. It was observed that prisoners were more at ease and more cooperative than formerly. This was attributed to the personal attention given during classification interviews. Staff planned to seek County Medical Association help for the drug users and educational and guidance opportunities for the younger offenders. Officials planned to continue the project after the test period ended and to use the experience as a basis for developing their own classification system.

JAIL C is another new city jail and is located on the Gulf Coast. It has a normal capcity of 487 and operates as a detention center primarily for adult males awaiting trial and sentenced prisoners on appeal. All booking occurs at a separate 166-man unit downtown. The main jail has a unit of maximum security single cells, a minimum custody wing and units of 4-man group cells. Unit day rooms are provided. Sentenced prisoners work on the farm and perform maintenance chores. Other activities include chapel services for minimum custody prisoners, dayroom recreation and donated reading material.

Staff used the classification material to a limited extent in making both housing and work assignments. Staff expressed surprise at the number of young prisoners awaiting trial on serious charges. They felt that the Prisoner Inventory form enabled the identification of medical problems that otherwise might have been missed. The form was used to check identity of visitors. The "who-to-notify" item was used several times. Staff experimented in using the classification material to identify additional prisoners who would be allowed to attend Chapel services. This ended when a "grand fight" resulted from unknown enemies getting together. Despite this, it was felt that the classification interviews enabled staff to know the prisoners better and that this tended to ease prisoner stress. It was also felt that Inventory information would be useful in planning a new jail by enabling design to meet the needs of more specific prisoner types.

JAIL D too, is a new jail located in a North Central city. With a normal capacity of 256, housing accomodations consist of 12-bed dormitories and inside single cells. An attempt is made to employ all sentenced prisoners. In addition to performing maintenance chores around the jail, trusties perform such work in town as doing the janitor work at the court house. Other activities include remedial education, group therapy, Alcoholics Anonymous, psychological testing, vocational training in auto

mechanics and welding and reading materials furnished by the State Library.

Classification interviews were conducted by two identification officers immediately after booking. The information was used in making work assignments for sentenced prisoners, but many prisoners were well known to staff and this knowledge tended to override decisions indicated by the classification rating sheet. Housing unit officers completed the back of the Prisoner Inventory form as required. Staff discovered that a large proportion of prisoners booked were actually held only a few hours or a day or two. The Inventory forms also documented the burdensome process of repeated bookings of habitual drunks. The Sheriff intended to use these facts to support an attempt to find ways of circumventing customary jail routines for these offenders. The Sheriff also thought that morale of both prisoners and staff improved during the test period. This was attributed to positive prisoner reaction to the attention given them and a corresponding tendency of staff to relax. Staff thought that the classification project would be even more valuable in a large metropolitan jail where most of the prisoners are unknown.

JAIL E is located in a South Central city. With a normal capacity of 364, this jail was built in 1925 but it was renovated and remodeled twice in the 1960's. Housing consists of single cells with front day rooms. This unit operates in conjunction with another 150-man holding facility for lesser offenders and the County Penal Farm. The Farm is intended for all sentenced prisoners as well as persons who will await trial for any length of time. As a result, activities at the main jail are rather limited. Only a few prisoners are assigned to maintenance chores. There is day room recreation, central radio, worship services and reading material furnished by local church and civic groups.

At the outset of the test period, arrangements had been made for one staff member to do all the classification interviewing but he became ill and the interviewing was relegated to housing unit officers on each of 3 floors whose work shifts changed every 4 weeks. This unfortunate circumstance interfered with proper completion of the Prisoner Inventory forms and with experimental decision-making. Despite this, there was staff consensus that the experimental rating sheets tended to confirm "seat of the pants" impressions of prisoners. Staff expressed surprise at the large number of persons who were released on bond after booking and expressed the general view that classification interviews tended to

relieve prisoner anxiety. On the basis of this fragmentary experience the Sheriff intends to improve the prisoner records system to reflect more information about each prisoner and to develop their own classification program.

JAIL F is a city jail on the Mexican border. It has a normal capacity of 448. Housing consists of both inside single and group cells, in addition to which there are dormitories for trusties. Sentenced misdemeanants perform necessary maintenance chores around the jail and they are housed separately. At the time of the test there were few other activities but plans had been completed for a demonstration grant to finance a group of correctional programs clustered around vocational training and work release.

Rather elaborate plans were made for the experimental classification project to insure that both housing and work assignments were based on the test materials. Tentative arrangements were also made for follow-up counseling and referral of prisoner problems to local agencies. All new prisoners were to be kept in holding cells until they were classified. Interviewing was to be done by booking officers under the supervision of a counselor who was to have functioned in effect as project director. Everything went as planned for the first two weeks but then the counselor left, several English-speaking jailers went on vacation and there was not sufficient help left to conduct interviews and do the paper work. A week after the experiment was prematurely terminated one prisoner murdered another. There was some speculation that this might have been avoided had the original classification plan been in effect. By the end of the test period some stratification of housing was left but there was no formal means of classifying prisoners.

Appendix B

PRISONER INVENTORY STUDY

FOR

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

BY

EXPRESS SOFTWARE SYSTEMS, INC.
324 Madison Avenue
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October, 1970

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the effectiveness of two scoring systems currently being developed to help estimate required supervision for prisoners and housing requirements. The two scoring systems were:

1) the Estimated Supervision Score based on answers to the Prisoner Inventory — a series of questions about the prisoners commitment status, background and appearance.

2) the Prisoners Characteristics Score, based on answers to questions about prisoners adjustment and relationships to personnel and other prisoners.

Each of these two estimated scores were constructed based on responses from a sample of jails, and *validated* against an *actual* supervision code assigned by wardens using normal procedures.

In addition, the present study offered an opportunity to evaluate other aspects of the effectiveness of the scoring systems such as *ease of response, sensitivity* of the scores and of the items making up the scores, and *reliability* of the scores across the various jails.

METHOD

1. Sample

   The sample size was 1,846. The surveys were taken in five jails: Dade County, East Baton Rouge County, Ingham County, El Paso County, and Shelby County.

2. Data Problems

   The following is a discussion of the problems which were incurred in the initial retrieval of the data from the forms.

   a. Dade County did not fill in the backs of the questionnaires.

   b. Dade County sent carbon copies which were not properly aligned.

   c. Instructions for filling out both the Estimated Supervision Code and the Housing Code were not followed at all.

   d. Housing Classification (single, group, dorm) was not coded.

e. Multiple responses were listed, in which case the first response was recorded.

f. The Charge or Offense category was often qualified and/or answered as "other". Possibly this category should be expanded.

3. Definitions of Calculations

a. Estimated Supervision Code was calculated according to specification.

b. Housing Code was calculated according to specification. If the person fell into two or more codes, each was counted.

c. The average scores for General Adjustment, Relations and Personnel, Relations with Prisoners and Prisoner Characteristics, were determined in the following manner:

1) Drop all "Don't know" answers.
2) Assign the following values:
   a) true = 1
   b) more false than true = 2
   c) more true than false = 3
   d) false = 4
3) Sum all values for each category.
4) Multiply the above sum by 10.
5) Divide the result in 4) by the number of "1-4" answers in each category.

The Prisoner Characteristics Average Score includes all categories.

CONCLUSION

1. IS THE ESTIMATED SUPERVISION SCORE BASED ON THE PRISONER INVENTORY AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM FOR ESTIMATING DEGREE OF SUPERVISION REQUIRED?

Yes. The ESS was based on questions which elicited high levels of response from wardens. It appears to be a *sensitive* and *reliable* tool, most importantly, a *valid* means of estimating the actual supervision code for prisoners.

a. Response rates for ESS questions

As a whole, the ESS questions resulted in very few "no answers" indicating that the Prisoner Inventory questions are practical and easy to obtain answers for.

Some items, however, were less completely responded to than others, indicating possibilities for further refinement of questions to minimize "no answers" which adversely affects the ESS. (See Tables 29-50 for items in the Prisoner Inventory where "no answers" exceed 3% — e.g. family support, length of employment, etc.)

b. Sensitivity and Reliability of the ESS

The ESS appears to be a potentially sensitive tool. Scores from the sample for this study were distributed fairly equally across the whole scale, indicating a broad range of classifications which the ESS is capable of measuring. This dispersion of scores occurred in each of the five participating jails. (Table 1)

The ESS also appears to be a reliable tool: scores developed for each of the participating jails indicated a reasonably consistent dispersion of scores across all five jails. The ESS did as well as the Actual Supervision Codes on dispersion of the scores and consistency across jails. (Table 1, 2 through 7)

c. Validity of the ESS Relative to Actual Supervision Code.

The ESS appears to be a reasonably good estimate of the actual supervision code assigned by wardens under current practices. The ESS correlates well with both the "first" supervision code and the "last" supervision code — at about .70 level of correlation.

This holds true for the total sample of all jails and also for each of the individual jails as well. (Tables 81 to 86, 96 to 105).

2. DOES THE PRISONERS CHARACTERISTICS SCORE REPRESENT AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM FOR ESTIMATING DEGREE OF SUPERVISION REQUIRED?

No. The questions on which this score was based were poorly responded to, both in number of responses and quality of response. Given the relatively poor raw data for this score, it is not surprising

that the PCS did not prove to be a good predictor of the Actual Supervision Code. Nonetheless, there are some indications that the concept of the PCS as an estimating tool could work if improvements are made in the data obtained.

a. Response rates for the PCS questions

The bulk of the sample for this study, the 1176 residents (out of 1846) from Dade County, as well as about 300 respondents from the other cities, did not answer any of the questions on the Prisoners Characteristics and Behavior. Of those who *did* answer this section of the questionaire, many did not respond to all of the questions. (Tables 51-63)

b. Sensitivity and reliability of the PCS

In addition to the low response rates, the quality of responses to the PCS questions was very poor — many respondents checked the same answer for all items, not discriminating in their responses. As a result, the Prisoners Characteristics Score is not a potentially sensitive score. Most of the respondents fell into the most favorable category, indicating that the respondent gave a "True" answer to all 10 questions, excepting only the attempted "Escape" question.

Prisoner Characteristic Score	%
10 (Good)	54
11 to 19	35
20 + (Bad)	11
(See Tables 101 to 108)	100

There is also little consistency in the pattern of responses across the various jails — in one jail, as many as 85% are in the 10 score category, whereas in another jail, only 2% fell in the 10 score group, an indication of both a lack of reliability as well as a lack of sensitvity in the estimated score.
(Tables 109 — 140)

c. Validity of the PCS vs. Actual Supervision Code

As might be expected, given the poor data in the PCS, it does not correlate well with the actual supervision code (correlation of .23). Neither the total PCS, nor the components of the PCS — the average score on General Adjustment, or the average

score on Relationships with Personnel, or the average score on Relationships with Prisoners — is a good estimate of the Actual Supervision Code. However, there is still an indication of a *slight* relationship even with the current PCS, when analyzed on a gross basis, suggesting that a PCS could work if the input data were better.

	Estimated PCS					
	Minimum (10 score)		Medium (11-19)		Maximum (20+)	
Actual First Supervision Code	#	%	#	%	#	%
Minimum	9	8	2	3	2	9
Medium	63	57	19	31	6	29
Maximum	38	35	40	66	13	62
	110	100	61	100	21	100

(See Tables 102, 104, 106, 108)

3. BASED ON THE PRESENT STUDY, WHAT ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH THE TWO ESTIMATING TOOLS — THE ESS AND PCS — MIGHT BE IMPROVED?

The experience with the present study suggests that improvements could be made in the following aspects of these tools:

- improving response rates
- improving sensitivity of the scores by improving discrimination in responses to specific items.
- improving ease of handling data for analysis

a. Response rates — ESS and PCS

The ESS is reasonably effective as it now stands, and the only obvious area for improvement is to decrease no-answers by clarifying or amplifying some of the questions in the Prisoner Inventory.

The bigger problems lie with PCS. Presumably, response rates could be improved with clearer instructions to the respondents and stressing the importance of the questions on the back of the questionnaire.

b. Increasing sensitivity of PCS

In addition, however, changes should be made in the questions. The balanced 4 point scale currently used (True, More true than false, More false than true, False) for responses to the questions, resulted in answers clustering in either the first or second box; hardly anyone responded in the two "false" boxes. Thus, it would seem desirable to use either an unbalanced 4 point scale, (e.g. Completely true, Usually true, Sometimes true, Not true; where three boxes are positive, and only one is negative) or better yet, a 6 point or 10 point unbalanced scale. (e.g. Completely true, Very true, Quite true, Somewhat true, Not true, Not very true, Not at all true is a 6 point unbalanced scale — 4 positives and 2 negatives.)

c. Ease of handling data — ESS and PCS

Finally, greater ease in tabulating and handling the data could be accomplished by pre-coding the questionnaire for both ESS and PCS and by altering the layout somewhat. This might also serve a double purpose in making the questionnaire easier to answer for the respondents, thus increasing response rates as well.

4. Process

After the forms had been filled in, they were sent by each jail to Express Software Systems, Inc. Each form was then stamped with an identification number to identify the form and jail. The forms were then hand coded so that they could be keypunched. After the keypunching, they were edited to correct possible coding and keypunch errors. For this process the Data Check Express software package was used. Tabulation specifications were changed somewhat in view of the data. After seeing the results of the first set of tables, a second set was run to explore certain areas of the Supervision Codes.